



apuntes

Reflexiones teológicas desde el contexto Hispano-Latino

**María, La Malinche, Guadalupe, Selena
and
The Spirituality of the Flesh**

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez

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Theological Reflections from a Hispanic-Latino Context

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María, La Malinche, Guadalupe, Selena
and
The Spirituality of the Flesh

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez

Hispanics favor the “the spirituality of the flesh” to the detriment of “the sins of the flesh” doctrine. To illustrate this topic I have selected four female icons: *María, La Malinche, Guadalupe and Selena*, and five portraits of some of them: the Virgin, the Immaculate One, the Mother of God, the Ascended One, and the Prophetic One.

By utilizing images I’m following Luther’s example of, on the Protestant side, sharing the Christian faith through icons, thanks to the artwork of Lucas Cranach the Elder.¹ In the Roman Catholic side, particularly in the Americas, Mary of Guadalupe will be the champion of the media available image in the same 16th century.

Mary of Nazareth will lead to what people have said about her, from the 1st century Mediterranean culture, as well as to a broad overview throughout twenty-one centuries of the Christian church. Since Martin Luther was the only Reformer who articulated a Mariology, some references to her German devotee will be apparent.

La Malinche and Guadalupe represent the two worlds which converged in Hernán Cortés, the 16th century Spanish invader of Mexico. La Malinche was Cortés’ lover and a symbol of resistance. Guadalupe was Cortés’ favorite virgin back in Spain, and then imported into the New Spain to be worshiped by the Mexican Indians.

With Selena, the contemporary Tejano music singer, we have before us the image that redeems the 21st century minoritized Hispanics in the U.S.A. This takes place mainly within the population of stubbornly politicized Mexican descendents, who called themselves Chicanos.

¹ Philip Ruge-Johns, *Cross in Tensions: Luther’s Critique of the Cross as Theologico-social Critique*, Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008.

Without further ado, let me state that by “spirituality” I mean an embodied spirituality, a fleshy spirit, or if you prefer, an incarnated spirit. This is a spirituality in which nothing earthy, no culture, no sex, no country, no language, and no one is too little to be ignored:

God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He is not far from any of us, and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. We are God’s children. (Acts 17.27-28).

In dealing with the spirituality of the flesh, my point of departure is my Protestant, Latino, heterosexual, Indian-looking and Chicano-rican chosen experience, alongside the curiosity to discover if it is really true that “Protestants do not believe in the Virgin,” or worse yet: “Lutherans are Roman Catholics, but without the Virgin.”

Let’s have a closer look at our four female icons and our five portraits of the Virgin, the Immaculate One, the Mother of God, the Ascended One and the Prophetic One.

The Virgin Mary

In Mary’s Jewish culture, virginity was a synonym of sterility, and therefore, the denial of the main purpose of the female body: procreation. Through their presence at the wedding in Cana (Jn 2), Jesus and Mary themselves blessed the marriage.

But in early Christianity virginity acquired a liberating female angle: to escape from the marital yoke, to reach self-determination, to end the eternal male tutelage of father-husband-son, to own an identity not derived from men, to chose an alternative vocation to those of being wife or prostitute.

Regarding male celibacy, this practice didn’t dismiss marriage. Ironically, the monks Jovian (388), the bishop of Damaso (366-84) Helvidius, and Bonoso, were fierce defenders of marriage, antagonists of the image of an asexual Mary, and enemies of the female “temptress” stereotype. However, this “spirituality of the flesh” prevailed mainly among some Christian mystics.

As early as the 2nd century, the *Proto Gospel of James* promoted the biological virginity, by converting Joseph, the bachelor, into the widower. Mary had to undergo the adulterer's test for being pregnant before marriage (Numbers 5.15ss). In spite of the severe ascetic emphasis against second nuptials, the remarried Joseph was preferred over the copulating one. In Spain second weddings were regarded as bigamy. In the USA marriage is a mark of success and at the same time half of them end up in divorce, and the divorced re-partner very quickly. "No-fault" Divorce Law in Texas expedites the process in step with our mood changes. Eventually John Paul II will stop giving communion to the remarried and divorced, unless they practice total sex abstinence.²

Virginity was related to the taming of the female sins of the flesh. In this context we are to understand the myth of the *vagina dentata* (vagina with teeth) that quarantined not only the clergy but also a good number of the laity, fearful of the female *instrumentum diaboli* (diabolical instrument). I was tempted to use Oprah Winfrey's popularized euphemism, "vajayjay" for vagina, but I overcame the temptation. It's about time to de-stigmatize our body parts.

Since the 2nd century, ascetic practices such as severe fasting were common. Their purpose was to instil not only virginity but also the interruption of what was considered impure menstrual blood, leading many women to death, as the notorious case of several women induced by Jerome.³

Atenagoras, who took from Plato the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, also declared the impossibility of remarriage, arguing that not even death could dissolve the marriage ties. Origin, the interpreter of *Song of Songs* as the mystical marriage of the soul with Christ, believed that the marriage of Mary and Joseph was merely a marriage of convenience. Irenaeus spoke of a painless childbirth, that is, without any physical rupture. Jerome went even further in stating that the brothers and sisters mentioned (Mt 13.55) were really first cousins; that Mary was the *Mater Inviolata* and that Joseph himself was and remained a

² Closing Speech of Roman Synod on Marriage and Family, October 25, 1980.

³ Warner, Marina, *Alone of All Her Sex, the Cult and the Myth of the Virgin Mary*, New York: Vintage Books, 1983, 74.

virgin. Agustin's Mary spoke of her perpetual virginity vows. Little wonder that Mary, the ever virgin, became a faith dogma at the Lateran Council (649), dispensing with semen in Jesus' conception.

At this point it would be helpful to open a parenthesis to remember that the virginal birth was not an exclusive doctrine of Christianity; there are parallels with other religions and philosophies and their founders, such as the case of Buda, Plato or the Roman emperors. In addition, the theological meaning of Jesus' virginal birth mentioned in the Bible (Mt 1.18) was understood as the Savior's recreation of history. In closing the parenthesis, let's bear in mind Luther's Christmas hymn, "From the Highest Heaven I come to the Earth," where he praised the "predestined" Mary for initiating God's plan of salvation.⁴

The German ex-monk then followed Zwingli's steps and married the ex-nun Catherine. In Ludwig Feuerbach's view, Luther dispensed with "Mary as the substitute-wife."⁵ In spite of reestablishing clergy marriage, the sins of the flesh dogma kept blaming women, associating them with the devil. Thus, William Perkins in his *A Discourse of the Damn Art of Witchcraft* (1596) continued in the Protestant tradition what Dominicans Johan Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer wrote in *Malleus maleficarum* (*The Witches' Hammer*) (1486).

Now it is time to shift to La Malinche, our second icon, to listen to what she has to say regarding virginity and the like.

La Malinche

Malintzin Tenépatl,⁶ —from *malinalli*, meaning "haz de zacate" (forage bales) — belonged to a noble family. She was born in Oluta, Chalchicueyecan, rebaptized by Spaniards as Veracruz. Due to a myriad

⁴ Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*. New Haven-London, Yale, 1996, p. 13.

⁵ Moltmann, Jurgen and Han Kung (eds.) *Concilium: Mary in the Churches*. Edinburgh-New York, T & T Clark-The Seabury Press, 1983, xiii.

⁶ Pérez-Álvarez, Eliseo. "Teoría del destino manifiesto en Cortés" 97-127, in Justo González, Daniel Rodríguez and Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez, *Desde el Reverso; materiales para la historia de la iglesia*, Mexico, D.F.: El Faro, 1993.

of reasons, she was kidnapped, given, traded and sold to Ollinteutly, Juan de Grijalba, Alonzo Hernández Portocarrero, Hernán Cortés and Juan Jaramillo. Malintzin, mispronounced by Spaniards as *La Malinche*, was uprooted from Coatzacoalcos to Tabasco, to Cuba, to Cozumel, to Mexico City.

After the battle of Centla, Tabasco, 20 women, including La Malinche, were given to Cortés as war booty. Contrary to Columbus' polity of the extermination of Caribbean Indians, Cortés opted for the mestizaje. The teenage Malinche was given to 34-year-old Cortés on Palm Sunday 1519. Since the Bible says "Do not be mismatched with the infidels" (1 Corinthians 6.14) the same day she was baptized and was granted her Christian name, Marina, namely "the one who comes from the union of sea and sky."

La Malinche stands for the spirituality of the flesh. Fertility rather than virginity is what matters. In fact, within the Andean Incas, female virginity was not a good recommendation. In choosing a mate, men preferred women who had already proven their fertility. It was not by chance that some Incan communities practiced polyandry, namely, one woman with multiple male partners. And furthermore, in contradistinction to the North-Atlantic missionary-position-with-the-lights-off, pre-Incan relics and Incan ruins show their own extensive sexual positions in a sort of "Incasutra." For them, procreation and recreation can very well cohabit.

Unfortunately, by mid 20th century Mexican intellectuals such as Nobel Prize Octavio Paz⁷ popularized the association of La Malinche with the raped woman, La Chingada, la Rajada, the one who opened her legs, Cortés' mistress; but this doesn't correspond to La Malinche's spirituality of the flesh. Paz didn't understand that from the Aztec perspective, La Malinche was not Cortés' "barragana," "corteja," "chilla," that is a mere mistress. He ignored the fact that in her culture polygamy was practiced by the lower clergy, the nobility and lower class

⁷ Barjau, Luis. *La conquista de la Malinche; la verdad acerca de la mujer que fundó el mestizaje en México*. México, D.F.: Conaculta, 2009, 208, 244.

soldiers with condecorations⁸. Yet more, it was believed that women who died childless would be punished in the afterlife⁹. By the same token, prostitution was tolerated among the *macehualli* or poor women. For instance, *ahuiani*, namely, prostitute, means “the happy one,” and up until today prostitutes are pointed out as “women of the happy life.” According to Aztec theology, there was no such thing as continuity between virginity and being more spiritual.

In our second portrait, the immaculate conception of Mary, we'll have the opportunity to elaborate more on the spirituality of the flesh.

THE IMMACULATE ONE (*Mochipa chipahuacatzintli*)

Mary

Macula, the Latin word for stain, points toward the doctrine of original sin, which states that Adam and Eve's act of disobedience is transmitted to humanity through sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, since Mary was the mother of Jesus, she was exempted from the original sin, by being immaculately conceived in Anne's womb.

This reasoning was not built on the mistranslation of Luke 1.28 [Mary,] “full of grace” which must be, “highly blessed by God.” No. What lies in the background is the doctrine of the sins of the flesh, the dismissal of the female body and of sex. Mary then did not experience the libido or concupiscence.

The rejection of the human body and materiality, in general has a long life. Plato considered the body a graveyard (*soma* - *sema*) and a prison for the soul (Cratylus 400c). René Descartes deprived the body (*res extensa*) from its spiritual dimension (*res cogitans*). The superiority of the spirit over the flesh trend has many tributaries.

⁸ Durán, Fray Diego. *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España i Islas de Tierra Firme*, vol 2, Mexico: Editora Nacional, 1951, 164. Quoted by López Austin, Alfredo. *Cuerpo Humano e Ideología*, Mexico: UNAM, 1996, 330, 342.

⁹ Madsen, William. *The Virgin's Children. Life in an Aztec village today*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960, xvi/248, quoted by Lopez Austin, 345.

Christianity inherited that conception of the flesh as sinful from the very outset, however, it increased towards the end of the 4th century. For instance we have the docetic (masqueraded) portrait of Mary, namely, that she “seemed” to be a normal human being. However, it was until the 12th century that the English monk Eadmar addressed the issue of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Jerome and Irenaeus wrote regarding Mary’s conception without sin in order to counteract the deteriorated image of Eve. The early Oriental Christianity of the 7th century established the “Feast of the Conception.” During the Middle Ages the *madonne de latte* (breast feeding Mother) was very common, especially in a Europe castigated by famine and plagues.

In the 13th century Thomas Aquinas,¹⁰ following Aristotle, preached that Anne’s unspotted womb witnessed the infusion of the rational soul in Mary “after animation” namely, after the first 40 to 80 days of conception, since the soul was granted after 8 weeks for men and 10 weeks for women!

Towards the end of the Middle Ages Mary’s veneration emerged with impetus alongside the image of the suffering, intimidating Jesus, whose death recalled the unforgivable human guilt.¹¹ Mary became the bastion of the vindicated humanity.

But the Renaissance saw the human body through the spirituality of the flesh. Instead of revisiting his concept of spirituality, Pope Paulo IV immediately requested that painter Daniele da Volterra dress the naked bodies of the Sistine Chapel. The Tridentine council embraced the Immaculate Conception portrait by giving Mary a waiver from child birth

¹⁰ (*Summa theologiae* 3a, 27.2, ad 2).

¹¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mujer nueva tierra nueva; la liberación del hombre y la mujer en un mundo renovado*. Buenos Aires, ed. Megápolis, 1977. p. 67.

pains and chapped nipples, since those punishments belong to Eve and her descendants.¹²

Martin Luther, in his sermon 291, as well as in other places still retained this Marian dogma: "But the other conception, namely the infusion of the soul, it is piously and suitably believed, was without any sin, so that while the soul was being infused, she would at the same time be cleansed from original sin and adorned with the gifts of God to receive the holy soul thus infused. And thus, in the very moment in which she began to live, she was without all sin..."¹³ Luther and the Reformers in general, believed that human nature was even more negative than that of Catholics [sic]. For them, humanity stood in a purely passive relation to God's grace"¹⁴

Protestantism in general rejected the Marian affirmations of *Ever-Virgin*, *Mater inviolata*, or *Tota pulchra*. It argued that from the holiness of Jesus didn't follow that Mary herself needed to be cleansed from birth, because this would lead us to affirm that Anne, Mary's mother also had to be cleansed, and Emerentia, Mary's grandma as well, up until Eve!

It won't hurt to make a detour to recall the Golden Legend of Mary's parents, Anne and Joachim. According to this popular narrative, after 20 years of marriage, they went to the Golden Gate in Jerusalem and while they were hugging each other, Anne got pregnant of Mary. This Mary, the future mother of Jesus, had two sisters also named Mary, from her mother's second and third re-marriages. Right at the time of the Reformation this Golden Legend reached its peak. The Reformers didn't waste time to ban the paintings of the Most Holy Grandmother of Jesus and his extended family of three husbands, three daughters, baby Jesus and plenty of grandchildren. Due to the lack of Biblical evidence, the

¹² Roselló Soberón, Estela. *Así en la tierra como en el cielo; manifestaciones cotidianas de la culpa y el perdón en la Nueva España de los siglos XVI y XVII*. Mexico, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2006, 225, n. 96.

¹³ Martin Luther, Weimar edition of *Martin Luther's Works*, English translation edited by J. Pelikan St. Louis MO: Concordia, Volume 4, 694.

¹⁴ Balasuriya, Tissa. *Mary and Human Liberation: the Story and the Text*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997, 151.

Protestant leaders' strategy preferred to substitute the Holy Kinship with the Sacred Nuclear Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. In Mexico the Spanish Inquisition went a step further and prohibited portraits of the nude baby Mary: "if we avoid nudity in the Christ Child, so, too, in the Virgin, his Mother, with even more reason, for being a woman."¹⁵ In the 17th century African-Mexican painter Juan Correa kept alive the Golden Legend including dark skinned characters and black angels in other paintings.¹⁶ The Immaculate Conception of Mary found fertile soil in Mexico where Anne, the "Mother of the Mother of God" is the most popular saint after Mary.

On December 8 1854 Pio IX, raised the Immaculate Conception of the Lady to the category of revealed dogma, and in 1870 declared the dogma of the infallibility of the pope. Pio IX didn't articulate a spirituality of the flesh. What took place was an animation where she was provided with an innocent soul and original justice. It is not fortuitous the fact that Christmas in Spain begins precisely on the 8th of December, the day of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

In our third portrait, "The Mother of God," will reiterate the privileging of the celibate life and the association of motherhood with impurity. In the meantime, it is the turn of our third icon, the one of the Immaculate Guadalupe.

Guadalupe

The *Nican mopohua* (Here It Is Told), is sort of "The Gospel of Guadalupe." According to this "seminal" text, it was on December 9, 1531 only a decade away from the massacre of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, when the Virgin Mary appeared in the form of a brown Lady. On his way from Cuauhtitlán to Tlatelolco, the Indian Cuauhtlatoatzin (Speaking Eagle) reached the Tepeyac Hill, northwest of Mexico City. While crossing the sacred Hill he heard some singing from above and after that, he heard somebody calling him. Cuauhtlatoatzin climbed the

¹⁵ Villaseñor Black, Charlene, "St. Anne Imagery and Maternal Archetypes in Spain and Mexico" 10, in Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff eds. *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

¹⁶ Villaseñor, 17.

Hill and the Virgin spoke to him: "Know, beloved son, that I am the immaculate ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the true God who is the Origin of all life, who creates all things and keeps them in being, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. I greatly wish, I earnestly desire, that my house should be built in this very place".¹⁷ She sent the new apostle to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga's palace to do that, but the skeptic bishop didn't believe him.

Another day on the same Hill, the Virgin came down again and asked the Indian to pick some Castilian roses and wrap them in his cape or *tilma*, and to take them to the bishop and unfold the cape in his very presence. To everybody's amazement, instead of flowers there was a gorgeous holy image of Mary of Guadalupe.

After Cuauhtlatoatzin's baptism he became Juan Diego. This Indian not only got a Christian name, he also got a Creole beard and clothes. Juan Diego didn't belong to the *pipiltin*, or the upper crust Indians. He was part of the common people or *macehualtin*, who dressed in *ayate* (cactus textile), didn't wear feathers, gold, jade or leather, and who were monogamous in order to be differentiated from the noble Indians.

So far so good with the official spirituality of the Immaculate Guadalupe. However, let's take a closer look from the spirituality of the flesh perspective.

Traditionally the *Nican mopohua* has been attributed to the pen of Antonio Valeriano, from the prestigious school of Tlatelolco.¹⁸ This text has been dated 1556, that is, 25 years after the Marian apparition in the Tepeyac; 8 years after Zumárraga's death, and 5 years after Alonso de Montufar, the new Archbishop took over. Intriguing enough, Zumárraga left behind not a single reference to the Guadalupan miracle, whereas Montufar was a champion of the Brown Virgin and of the Counter Reformation movement.

¹⁷ León-Portilla, Miguel. *Tonantzin Guadalupe: pensamiento náhuatl y mensaje cristiano en el "Nican mopohua"*, Mexico, D.F.: FCE, 2000.

¹⁸ León-Portilla, 33.

Now, we have to recall that the name of Guadalupe is one of the 4000 Arab words borrowed by the Spanish language. *Wad al luben*, meaning “River of wolves,” was impossible to pronounce in Náhuatl since this language does not have neither the “G” nor the “D” sounds. Furthermore, the Virgin of Guadalupe was already venerated in Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain. Columbus had already named a Caribbean Island Guadeloupe. Finally, the most striking fact is that the *Nican Mopohua* deleted all memories of Aztec Goddess *Teotl inantzin* (the mother of God), or *Tonantzin* (our mother). What this document did with letters Gonzalo Sandoval did with iron by destroying Tonantzin sculpture, during the seven months Cortés established his army headquarters at the Tepeyac holy mountain.

Having said that, we must conclude that the icon of the Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe was used by the Spanish army and clergy to divert the attention from burning issues such as the plundering of land and wealth. The Spanish and Portuguese crowns exchanged favors with Pope Alexander VI, who in 1493 granted them the entire American continent with the condition to evangelize its natives, and of course, to collect a monetary tribute. However, the compulsory questions are: why Christianize the Indians if they were not considered human beings, and therefore their lands were declared nobody’s lands? How is it that the Indians shared the *macula*, the stain of original sin of Adam and Eve, if Pope Paul III granted their humanity until 1537?

That’s why some people believe that the author of the *Nican Mopohua* was not the Indian Valeriano but the Creole Miguel Sánchez, who referred to Guadalupe as the “Sacred Creole Lady.” According to this, he was fertilizing the soil for the Creole 17th century, where land was deprived from the Indians and the Peninsular Spaniards.¹⁹ It was not enough to be *semihidalgo*, you have to be *hidalgo*, namely, “son of somebody,” that is, not to have any stain on all four grandparents’ sides. To be immaculate meant to have white European blood. Even *Don Quijote*’s author, Miguel de Cervantes, didn’t make it into the Americas

¹⁹ Caballero Zamora, Carlos. *El lado oculto de la Guadalupeana; su autenticidad india*, Mexico, DF: Dabar, 1999, 35.

in his two attempts because he couldn't prove that in his veins didn't run Islamic, Jewish or Lutheran blood!

There's something cunning here. We just have to remember that the dogma of original sin is also a curse which includes the snake and the land. The only thing is that the Spanish clergy on the one hand demonized the land (Genesis 3.17), but on the other hand, quoted Deuteronomy 8.10, to the delight of the creoles: "You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good lands that he has given you."

From the point of view of the spirituality of the flesh, the snake is a sacred animal simply because she is very attached to the soil. The land is our Pachamama, or Mother Earth; our Abya-Yala or fertile land; a source of veneration and gratitude. For instance, the political Constitution of Ecuador granted her rights as a living being. It was not for nothing that even though the Guadalupan icon was encouraging their docility, the Indians never cut ties with *Tonantzin*. And still more, the Indians reclaimed the *macehual* Juan Diego who didn't forge the Immaculate Icon. Instead, *macehuales* "continued to worship fertility, nourishment and agricultural female deities of crops and rain. They continued to venerate *Chalchiuhtlicue* (goddess of sweet or inland water), *Chicomecoatl* (goddess of food) and *Huixtocihuatl* (goddess of salt).²⁰ Guadalupe-Tonantzin was intertwined with a culinary spirituality.

From the introduction of Guadalupe follows the introduction of Martin Luther, since the virgin was associated with good and the Reformer with evil in the new Paradise of the American Continent.

Martin Luther was zoomorphicized as the seven-headed dragon conquered by Guadalupe, or as the snake which was stepped on by the Lady of Guadalupe. Inflamed by the Council of Trent, Archbishop Montufar pushed the Marian agenda as an antidote to the Protestant European disease of the protestant heresy. Simply stated: if Luther destroyed the Christian church unity in Europe, he couldn't in the Americas because Guadalupe successfully stopped him. The virginal

²⁰ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987, 33.

new Continent kept the immaculate gospel according to the Council of Trent. It was until 1776 that the Americas lost its purity due to the independence from England, of the 13 North American mainly protestant colonies. The European “black legend” against Spain for being backwards and ignorant due to its Roman Catholicism and its hispanicness was neutralized by the legend of the new paradise beyond the Atlantic sea. María de Guadalupe was the almighty fortress to repel the rebel Luther. The more Spain lost its power and might in Europe, the more tenacious the Virgin became during the 300 years of the colonization of Mexico, to the delight of the creole landowners. It was only 150 years ago, on December 4, 1860, when President Benito Juárez enacted the freedom of worship law.

At this point let's recall that during the Diet of Worms, Spain emerged as the bacon of Roman Catholicism, and that the same year of 1521 Spain devastated Mexico-Tenochtitlan, later known as New Spain. Still more, Luther was confronting Charles V, who was not only the head of the Sacred Roman German Empire but the King of Spain as well.

Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman argued convincingly how the Virgin of Guadalupe little by little emerged as the champion of the Counter-Reformation in Mexico.²¹ Since her Maryophany in the Tepeyac, her career has been in *crescendo*. Guadalupe became Mexico City's Matron in 1737 and in 1754 Pope Benedict XIV declared her the New Spain's Lady, to be celebrated on December 12. In the 19th century president Benito Juárez only allowed one religious feast: the one of Mary of Guadalupe. In 1910 Pope Pio X designated María de Guadalupe Matron of Latin America. Pope John Paul II declared December 12 a universal feast. Mexican television duopoly has the monopoly of the Tepeyac's transmissions, alongside with several Guadalupe-center programs. Recently Senator John McCain and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton paid Guadalupe a visit at the holy mountain.

²¹ Mayer, Alicia. *Lutero en el Paraíso: La Nueva España en el espejo del reformador alemán*, Mexico, D.F.: UNAM – FCE, 2008. See specially “La Virgen María y Lutero: el bien y el mal en el Paraíso indiano” 311-344.

In addition, Guadalupe was the antithesis to Luther also as the immaculate apocalyptic woman of Revelation 12: The light behind her back, the dragon smashed under her feet, her crown full of stars, her sky blue cape, and the half moon where she stands. All those images of the redemptive role of the brown virgin against the heresiarchs of Germany, Switzerland or England, sent the powerful message: The *Ecclesia triumphans* took shape in the Americas. Of course, from the Latin-American perspective, that interpretation of Revelation 12 doesn't do justice to women. According to this, Revelation 12 talks about a non-hierarchical communion with Mother Earth represented by the woman. The Roman Empire is the dragon which persecutes her because women have the power to bring new life in the everydayness. Women are able to start a new creation precisely in the midst of the chaos originated by the neoliberalism system which, through the ecological sins, destroys particularly the life of women and children.²²

In a very schematic way we already visited the portraits of the Ever-Virgin and the Immaculate One, and now we're moving to our third one, the Mother of God.

THE MOTHER OF GOD (*Tonantzin Totecuyoe*)

Mary

This portrait has also been very popular, even though Jesus personally combated the formula, woman = child machine, with sayings such as "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you." No! "Rather, blessed are those that hear the Word of God and obey it." (Luke 11.27-28)

In the next few lines we'll continue our interrupted theme of sex equals impurity developed above with the Immaculate One.

Allow me to begin by complicating things. Let's bear in mind that during Jesus' lifetime he was labeled illegitimate: "we are not

²² Aparecida Felix, Isabel. – Mercedes de Bulladés Díez, "A terra e a mulher. Uma leitura ecológica," in *A Palavra da vida* 177/178, Centro de Estudos Bíblicos. São Leopoldo, RS. 2002, 55-60.

bastard sons.” (John 8.41). Celsius, the philosopher from the late 2nd century gathered the tradition which argued that Jesus’ real father was Panthera, a Roman soldier. That narrative made perfect sense in all societies that have experienced the military boot and are well aware of the licentious behavior of invading soldiers. Nonetheless, the most important fact is that raped female bodies are themselves considered a battle ground, war booty, a social shame for the men who were incapable of defending their women’s honor. Furthermore, let us bear in mind the compulsory celibacy to all the low rank soldiers during their military service. Only the top officials could marry; therefore, the proliferation of brothels and “families” on the outskirts of the military camps.²³ Within this context Schaberg²⁴ claims that Mary was a single mother, whose son was a result of rape.

The Christian school of Alexandria liked to paint Mary as the mother of God, *Theotokos* (Greek) or *Dei genitrix* (Latin), not in order to divinize Mary. Their intention was to emphasize the divinity of Jesus Christ, but they ended up undermining Jesus and Mary’s humanity. Clement went as far as to state that "Jesus had a digestive system so well-balanced and regulated that he was wholly spared the embarrassment of excretion."²⁵

The Christian school of Antioch, which was more historically rooted, rejected this portrait of Mary from the very beginning, which was promoted early in the Provincial Council of Alexandria, in preparation for the Council of Nicaea (318-20) and became official in the Council of Ephesus (431).

Mary, the woman in childbirth, established the motherhood role for women as their essence: “women will be saved through

²³ Eduardo Arens, *Asia Menor en tiempos de Pablo, Lucas y Juan*, Spain: Almendro, 1995, 101.

²⁴ Jane Schaberg. *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, quoted by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. *Jesus Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet*. New York: Continuum, 1995, 169.

²⁵ Leyerle, Blayle. "Clement of Alexandria on the Importance of Table Etiquette," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1995), pp. 129 - 130, with note 33 on p. 130.

childbearing.” (1 Timothy 2.15). If procreation as the only criteria for all sexual intercourse, occurring only inside marriage, as a consequence, marriage eventually was considered a sacrament. However, on the other extreme “The ‘womb love’ of a mother is missing from most theological representations of God, especially because of dualistic understandings of matter and spirit, human and divine, natural and supernatural, which are still prevalent.”²⁶

Martin Luther didn’t have problems in calling Mary the *Theotokos*: “She is rightly called not only the mother of the man, but also the Mother of God ... It is certain that Mary is the Mother of the real and true God.”²⁷

In 1555 the Council of Trent promoted Joseph as sole patron of Mexico, in order to replace the uncomfortable image of Anne, her three husbands and three daughters. This was a big loss for the sterile women and mothers in childbirth who considered Anne their matron.²⁸

Our Latin American cultures have inherited from Spain²⁹ a very negative portrait of Mary. A clear example is Candlemass of the “Feast of Purification,” on February 2. This celebration talks about the Jewish rite of the cleansing of “Mary in childbirth.” Women with means were able to remain 40 days at home after childbirth in order not to contaminate their neighbors. Poor women who could not keep the quarantine would go out in the street, carrying a tile over their heads in order to remain separate from the rest of society. This Feast is a reminder of the permanent “feminine impurity”, of their “unclean” blood, of their “filthy” placenta (from Latin *sordes*, filth). It is not surprising that married people were buried in black coffins and not in white ones, reserved for the celibate. It is also not an innocent fact that the baby Jesus was snatched away from the Virgin Mary’s arms in innumerable pictures.

²⁶ Balasuriya, 87.

²⁷ Martin Luther, Weimar edition of *Martin Luther's Works*, English translation edited by J. Pelikan, St. Louis Concordia: volume 24, 107.

²⁸ Villaseñor Black, 13.

²⁹ Cf. George M. Foster, *Cultura y conquista; la herencia española de América*. 2nd ed., Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana, 1985, p. 197 s.

Female menstrual blood has been surrounded by a myriad of myths in spite of the fact that the sacrament of the *communio* means that what binds our bodies together with Jesus are our blood ties. Jewish women would panic over the abundant flow of blood because of fear of jeopardizing procreation. Spaniards kept blacks, Indians and mestizos away from priesthood because, according to the Europeans the “dirty blood” was an obstacle for a life of chastity. That concept of blood clashed with the one held by the Indians from the Americas, for whom “Nana, the creator mother, created from diverse colors, the plants, fishes, snakes and all the animals, out of her menstrual flow.”³⁰

If procreation was the only component that validated intercourse, then all sexual relations which won't lead to that will be prohibited. Thank God for the *ilamatlatolli* (speeches of the wise elderly women) and for the *huehuetlatolli* (speeches of the wise elderly men), the postmenopausal, old Aztec women claimed their sexual rights. Nezahualcoyotl, the 15th century poet and ruler faced a case where two old women were cheating their husbands with two youngsters who served in the temple. Nezahualcoyotl was shocked when he realized that the accused females were very old, with their hair completely gray and tough like a cactus. He asked them if they were not ashamed of being very old and living double lives. Didn't you get enough throughout the years? If this is how you are now; I can't imagine how you were before! Nezahualcoyotl scolded them, but the old women not even batted an eyelash. Instead they answered: “You men, when you get old you don't like the fleshy pleasures any more... But we, women, never get tired of these activities, and we never have enough of them, because our bodies are like a deep abyss, a cave that never fills; it welcomes everything...wishing more and asking for more.”³¹

³⁰ Ibarra, D. E. *Cosmogonía y mitología indígena americana*, Buenos Aires: 1980, 82ss. Quoted in Salinas, M., *Gracias a Dios que comí*. México, D.F.: Dabar, 2000, 52.

³¹ Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Códice Florentino*, Alfredo López Austin – Josefina García Quintana eds. Mexico, D.F.: CONALEP – Alianza Editorial Mexicana, 1980, 382. See also Marco Antonio Campos, *En recuerdo de Nezahualcoyotl*, Mexico, D.F.: Diana, 1994, 57.

The portrait of Mary in childbirth can be an oppressive message as it is articulated under the name of Marianism: “*Marianismo* is about sacred duty, self-sacrifice, and chastity. This cultural phenomenon focuses on dispensing care and pleasure, not receiving them. The *Marianismo* mentality fosters an environment in which women live in the shadow, literally and figuratively, of their men (father, boyfriend, husband, and son), children, and family.”³²

After almost two centuries of Joseph being the only Patron of Mexico, in 1746 he had to share the floor with the emerging Virgin from the Tepeyac, to whom we now return.

Guadalupe

Guadalupe never poses as the Mother of God in any portrait. People might think that King Herod’s campaign of the killing of children was a success, exactly as our contemporary racist population control propaganda has achieved its goals. Or as immigration agents believe that Jesus was hidden behind Mary’s back like an “anchor baby” as they call the babies carried on Latina’s back!

Guadalupe is a very common Mexican unisex name. Actually, the first president changed his name of José Miguel Fernández Felix to Guadalupe Victoria, and the Villa de Guadalupe church at the Tepeyac, convenes more than 6 million pilgrims yearly.

In Mexican Colonial Period, it was not the married one but the prostitute that was placed in opposition to María de Guadalupe: she possesses her jewel, her most precious treasure, her honor, her virtue, her virginal organ.

³² Gil, Rosa María and Carmen Inoa Vázquez, *The María Paradox: How Latinas Can Merge Old World Traditions with New World Self-Esteem*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996, 7. Quoted by Nora O. Lozano-Díaz, “Ignored Virgin or Unaware Women: A Mexican-American Protestant Reflection on the Virgen of Guadalupe” 90. In Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby, *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Childless Guadalupe still symbolizes the sex-sin equation. Even as we speak, when a Mexican woman is pregnant we say *está enferma* (she is sick), or when a woman delivers a child, we say *se alivió* (she got well).

However, from the angle of the spirituality of the flesh, popular religion is so daring: Mary regains her self-determination and free-will in relation with her body. The grassroots Mexicans vindicate Mary's sexuality and her "right to choose": The Zinantecos considered the Virgin Mary a woman who lay with many men, therefore no one wanted to help her with the birth of her son, and only her older brother Joseph supported her; the *Posadas* consist of processions that represent this crude reality for millions of women.³³

Orgasm was considered a major sin of the flesh by the theological authorities since Augustine. He actually catalogued it as a variation of demon possession. The Bishop of Hippo wanted couples to procreate without reaching the climax.³⁴ Whereas the spirituality of the flesh doesn't have any problem with exactly the opposite.

Luther was of the opinion that it was a necessary evil, as expressed in his *Large Catechism*, when referring to the copula between spouses: "it is an imperative but deplorable activity." The French still call it *petite mort*. In contradistinction, for the Aztec, orgasm was equivalent to the mystical union with the Divine.³⁵

There's still a long way to go in our task of "healing the split between the spiritual and the physical...[and] challenging patriarchy's division of spirituality and sexuality."³⁶ In the meantime, we are ready to

³³ Infante, J. M. "Psicoanálisis de la fiesta mexicana", in Pérez H. (ed.). *México en fiesta*, Zamora: 1998, p. 143.

³⁴ *La Ciudad de Dios*, 14.16

³⁵ Morgan, M. I. *Sexualidad y sociedad en los aztecas*. Mexico, 1983. Quoted by Salinas Campos, 444.

³⁶ Socorro Castañeda-Liles, "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Politics of Cultural Interpretation," 170. In Espinosa, Gaston – Mario T. Garcia. Eds. *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

meditate on our fourth portrait of the Ascended One, through the icons of María and Selena.

THE ASCENDED ONE

María

With the Constantinization of the Christian Church in the 4th century, emerged an abundance of Marian paintings: of the religious pilgrimages or *romerías* (from Rome, Luke 2.22); of the reflective woman who “treasured all these things in her heart” (Luke 2.19); of the mother of the church, (Genesis 3.15 and Luke 1.38); of the intercessor and co-redeemer, etc.

Augustine left his imprint in his teaching about the *massa damnata*, the fallen mass. This doctrine affirms that sin is sexually transmitted to all humanity and the stains of original sin can be removed solely through baptism (John 3.5). By the way, the current sperm banks are not far from Augustine since they only keep the Nobel prize and jet set person's sperm and eggs.

As we mentioned above, the original sin of Adam and Eve was a sexually transmitted disease, but Anne's womb was spotless. Yet more, if the wages of sin is death, this doesn't apply to Mary because her body didn't bear corruption. Therefore, her assumption to heaven had a way clear of obstacles.

The evolution of the dogma of the ascension of Mary, nonetheless, dates back to the 5th and 6th centuries in the West, when folk literature refers to her transit to heaven. Faced with the tradition that affirms that the mother of Jesus died in Ephesus, Meliton of Sardis attested that she died in Jerusalem, miraculously surrounded by the 12 apostles. He went on to assert that Mary was buried in a new tomb and that her Son, with a host of angels prevented her body from experiencing putrefaction by raising her from the dead. Jerusalem, in the 4th century, established the *Feast of Dormitio* (or transit). Rome adopted the celebration by the end of the 7th century and renamed it as the *Feast of the Assumptio*. By the 13th century Mary the ascended one is known

through liturgical texts. But it was until November 1, 1850, when Pope Pío XII declared the physical assumption of Mary a dogma of faith.

The ascension of Mary first took place in the collective imagery by conceiving her as an effective intercessor. Even Anselm of Canterbury, the theologian who articulated the expiation doctrine, was fond of Mary the Mediatrix. Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the only way to save God's justice. However, forgiveness can be found exclusively through the compassionate intercession of Mary: "the accused person runs away from God to the good Mother of the Merciful God."³⁷

Martin Luther was devoted to the Virgin Mary; in fact he dedicated the hymn "To Me She's Dear, the Worthy Maid" to her. The Reformer rejected the song "Hail Regina," but never abandoned the image of Mary and her Child. No wonder the Hymn Book "With One Voice" includes the song: "Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly."

Two years before his death, Luther abandoned the celebration of Mary's Ascension because he did not find any Gospel reference. The German Reformer was more than justified in being very selective. On his pilgrimage to Rome in 1501, he not only was shown hair belonging to Mary, but even her breast powder milk, and maybe baby Jesus' holy foreskin, too!

Before we introduce Selena, our last icon, allow me to quote André Gide, the French atheist converted to the spirituality of the flesh:

"*The resurrection of the body*" says the church, knowing that the soul needs the body to make itself lovable, and that, if the Word wouldn't have 'made flesh' it would have very few worshipers. Can you imagine them kneeling before a triangle? ...not even our most mystical affections can live without a material representation. We need symbols, monuments, statues, flags, to provide our feelings with some kind of evidence."³⁸

³⁷ Warner, Marina. *Tú sola entre las mujeres: el mito y el culto de la Virgen María*, Madrid: Taurus, 1991, 407.

³⁸ André Gide: *Journal 1939-49. Souvenirs*. Gallimard, Collection Pleiade, 1954, 38-39. Cited by Frank Gonzalez-Crussi, "La anatomía de la Virgen" 132,

Selena

Tejano music singer Selena climbed into heaven not only because the entertainment industry included her twice in the New York Times cover, in the Grammys awards, in the front page of *Fama* magazine of Mexico, or in the million of records sales list. Not at all. Selena was canonized from below, by the Mexican-American people who don't belong neither to the USA, nor to the Mexican dominant cultures.

After her assassination in 1995, this 23-year-old curvy woman became "Santa Selena," the *simul Iustus et peccator* lady, saint and sinner, sexy and immaculate, who synthesizes the spirituality of the flesh: "She really was *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and *La Malinche*... all wrapped up in one silken *rebozo* [shawl]. She was the Madonna-whore of every Latino male's fantasy. As *La Virgen*, she appeared full of light and grace...As *La Malinche*, she embodied the modern woman, with *pasiones de la carne*, or passions of the flesh."³⁹

For 15 years her beatification through shrines, votive candles, street and home altars, pilgrimage sites, key chains, t-shirts, and so on, hasn't stopped. Granted that "Mexican American pop culture is rooted in a grounded aesthetic that materializes the sacred and sacralizes the profane in everyday life;"⁴⁰ granted that people were aware that she was born on Easter Sunday April 16, 1971 and was killed on a Friday on Cesar Chavez's birthday; granted that the governor contributed to her veneration by declaring April 16 Selena Day in Texas; nonetheless, from that doesn't follow that the Corpus Christi singer didn't have merits of her own for her heavenly upgrade.

Selena Quintanilla Pérez was a business woman role model as a jewelry and clothes designer, owning a salon and boutiques. Selena's

in Castillo, Ana. *La Diosa de las America: escritos sobre la virgen de Guadalupe*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000.

³⁹ Barbara Renard González, "Santa Selena?" *Latina*, April-May 1997, 83.

⁴⁰ Gastón Espinosa, "Mexican Madona: Selena and the Politics of Cultural Redemption" 361, in Espinosa.

millions never owned her, since she continued living in her \$ 44,000 home in the Molina barrio in Corpus Christi. Contrary to her grandparents' experience of being persecuted by classist Mexicans, as she tells the story in the cumbia "Amor prohibido" (prohibited love), Selena dared to marry her guitarist. Selena democratized the Tejano music world dominated by men, and dignified the *norteña* music genre despised by wealthy Mexicans. Selena is a role model for Hispanics to stay in school no matter what.

In any event, if Selena were still alive, her spirituality of the flesh would refrain her from blessing the social climbing myth which states that everybody can make it into the wealthy upper class. She would've stopped playing the Zero-sum game, where some people climb because others go down, and would've moved to the Positive-sum game where there are no losers.

Instead of her ascension, aren't María, La Malinche, Guadalupe and Selena more concerned about the Creed's confession: "Jesus descended into hell"? This question will be addressed in the prophetic dimension of the Virgin.

THE PROPHETIC ONE

María

Mary, the woman who remains beside the one condemned to death, and death on the cross (Jn 19.25-27) has been defamed as a hysterical person before the Roman soldiers torturing her son. In fact, hysteria was considered a "disease of the womb" or of the uterus.

Nothing further from the truth. Mary was not a soft person. She endured not only Jesus' martyrdom, but probably also John the Baptist's and Steven's! As a true prophet, Mary possessed the profile of a liberating messenger. Contrary to Rome's herald Virgil who announced that the empire "destroys the haughty and welcomes the submissive people," Mary articulated a protest song: The *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*:

...He has stretched out his mighty arm
and scattered the proud with all their plans.
He has brought down the mighty kings from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away with empty hands...

In her Near Eastern society it was clear that the established "disorder" attempted against the humble, that is, women, the poorest of the poor. The hungry related to the most forsaken beings: the widows. To lift up the lowly implied the resurgence of women as bearers of a child.⁴¹ The *Magnificat*, therefore, originates as a song from the popular Christian communities with Old Testament roots (1S 2.1-10).

God chose the poor people of this world
to be rich in faith and to possess the kingdom
that he promised to those who love him.
But you dishonor the poor! Who are the ones who oppress you
and drag you before the judges? The rich. (James 2.5-7).

In his commentary on *The Magnificat* Luther repeatedly calls Mary "the sweet mother of God." And the Reformer's disciples recognize her as the guarantee of the historicity of Jesus' incarnation and humanity.⁴² Therefore, it should not be surprising to see Mary's picture hanging on the former Augustinian monk's wall.⁴³

⁴¹ Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women*. Philadelphia, Westminster, 1979, p. 189.

⁴² *Formula of Concordia*, XII. 25, 157.

⁴³ O'Meara, Thomas A. O.P., *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1966, p. 124.

Luther celebrated the following Marian feasts: Mary's Annunciation (March 25); Mary's Visitation (July 2); Mary's Assumption (August 15); Mary's Nativity or Hail Mary (September 8); Mary's Conception (December 8); and, Mary's Purification or Candlemass (February 2). However, in his last years, he kept only the three Bible-based celebrations: The Annunciation (Luke 1.26-38), the Visitation (Luke 1. 39-56) and the Purification (Luke 2. 22-38).

Luther sang the *Magnificat* each and every day. He lingered to reflect on this image in his *Commentary* on it.⁴⁴ He begins by socially placing Mary as a woman, daughter of poor parents, "in charge of the cattle and the house" (382) and "a person whom the daughter of Mr. Annas and Caiaphas would not have considered worthy of being her most humble servant." (383) From his hiding place in the Castle of Wartburg, our Reformer, connects this song of the virgin with the social message of the Old Testament prophets and their denouncing of economic injustice: "no one could reprove riches more categorically and terrify the rich more frightfully than with the threat that God will leave them empty-handed." (428) The German monk quotes German sayings: "a prince is a rare bird in heaven" or "rich here, poor there." (423) And he detects the underlying tension between life and the hoarding of bread: "That is why he calls the greedy and covetous of temporal riches *slaves of the stomach*, as Paul points out that their god is the stomach." (427) In the Marian song, Luther, the Bible exegete, discovers her demand before the authorities for the common good and the well-being of all people: "For when a governor or an authority does not love his people, but is only concerned with having a good life, without the betterment of his people, his cause is already lost." (435)

With María the prophet we may wonder why God didn't choose a woman from the upper crust, with royal blood on all sides, for the incarnation of our Liberator Jesus Christ. But instead God took the side of Mary, the young maiden in a small village (Mk 5.3-4), the undocumented and fugitive from King Herod, the contrabandist from heaven, the poor woman (Lk 2.24).

⁴⁴ *Obras de Martín Lutero*. T. vol. VI. Buenos Aires, La Aurora, 1979, 373-436.

In this cascade of icons and portraits, let's turn now to La Malinche painted as a prophet.

La Malinche

Needless to say, we are lacking the hurrahs (from the Arab *harayer*, free woman) and acclamations for the prophet image of La Malinche. Let's keep in mind that the virgin Mary wearing military clothes in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a relic of *La Conquistadora* from the 16th century. A whole cargo of all kinds of images, statues and sculptures of the "Conqueror Mary," landed in Mexico shortly after the military massacre of 1521. Cortés distributed those images all over to Cozumel, Zempoala, Tabasco, even in Moctezuma Palace and the Main Temple: "The Conquering effigy, as its name proclaims, both a Virgin and an image, the *Conquistadora*, supported, legitimized and completed the military and earthly enterprise of the conquistadores."⁴⁵

Before and during Mexico's independence (1810-1821) the Peninsular Spaniards living in New Spain or Mexico, used La Malinche as a weapon against creoles, namely, Spaniards born in Mexican lands.⁴⁶ The "sin of La Malinche" then echoed "Eve's original sin," in blaming the other, especially women by linking La Malinche "with treachery, sexual transgression and lover of everything that is foreign, namely, 'malinchista.'"⁴⁷ Spaniards in the 19th century and mestizos such as Octavio Paz in the mid 20th century then contributed to "the building of a self-dismissing speech so ingrained in the Mexicans. A virulent substance which really always found fertile land in the subjectivity of the people."⁴⁸ This tendentious interpretation of La Malinche was even exported to the USA through the Mexican emigrants known as

⁴⁵ Gruzinski, Serge. *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Bade Runner* (1492 - 2019), Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, 34.

⁴⁶ Barjau, Luis. 208, 244, 250.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bartra, Roger. *La Jaula de la melancolía; identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano*. Mexico DF., Grijalbo, 1996, pp. 171-185.

⁴⁸ Barjau, Luis. 257.

“Pachucos,” (weird, snob or without nobility) namely, the champions of bad taste.⁴⁹

Once la Malinche procreated a girl with her second “husband,” soldier Juan Jaramillo, she rushed to call her *María*. The purifying Marian symbol is loaded to the extent that it also embraces men: the diminutive *Marica* or *Maricón*, or even the diminutive of the diminutive of Mary, *Mariquita*, stands in opposition to the heterosexual, i.e., queer.

La Malinche suffered another transfiguration into *La Llorona*, namely, the crying woman, who runs all over crying for her own Indian people she helped to destroy. While Goddess Quilaztli wept every night throughout Tenochtitlán avenues warning her children of the coming destruction, Malinalli was chosen as the escape goat to hide Moctezuma’s cowardice and naiveté. La Malinche experienced the victimization of the victim by being a link in Eve’s chain of impure and sexually driven women.

However, let’s take a peek at the prophetic dimension of La Malinche through the spirituality of the flesh hermeneutics. Malintzin was the teenager multiple times betrayed by her own people and by Spaniards as well. Malintzin was the *faraute*, linguist or translator, “The Tongue,” who brought together the Nahuatl, Maya and Spanish worlds. Malintzin was the chef who recreated African, Indian, Arab and Spaniard cuisine. Malintzin was the one who revisited the Aztec spirituality while listening to her mother Tonantzin: “Our rites are going to change, we’re going to use a different language, other type of prayers, our way of communicating is not going to be the same. But the Old Gods and Goddesses, the unshakable, the ones of nearness and togetherness, the ones who don’t have beginning nor end, they are going to change only in their form.”⁵⁰

Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler when Spaniards arrived, was called “Tlatoani,” the “one who speaks” or have the power to speak. He had an everyday buffet style of more than 300 hundred freshly prepared dishes. Moctezuma wore sandals decorated with lots of gold and silver. He had

⁴⁹ Barjau, Luis. 245.

⁵⁰ Esquivel, Laura. *Malinche*, New York: Atria Books, 2006, 178.

a crown with blue feathers as a sign of nobility. His servants always made reverence and bowed their head and never showed him their backs. He was surrounded by musicians and female dancers. Other tlatoanis had to honor him by taking off their sandals and wearing humble clothes, but La Malinche didn't follow the protocol. She spoke directly, looking into his eyes, without etiquette rules, as a co-equal.

The Prophet Malinche had her fill of the absolutist Aztec state which controlled everything from birth to death: food, clothes, religion, amusement, agriculture, thinking, loving.⁵¹ La Malinche was not impressed by the ruler of Tenochtitlan, the largest city in the world since then.

La Malinche was considered Goddess *Teocihuatl*, the one who spoke the language of the divine. Tlaxcala mountain *Matlalcueye*, the Rain Goddess, was renamed after La Malinche, who always provides the copulating couples with a dose of fertility and eroticism.⁵² Mexican State of Tabasco honors her in its official banner. All official documents from the 16th century address her as "Doña Marina," or Mrs. Marina. In Oluta, her home town, the dance of La Malinche takes place precisely on Guadalupe Day of December 12.

Prophet La Malinche, thus, is a permanent portrait of a woman who confronted the powers that be, without losing her capacity to love: "Si parquet tee quire quires,/ quires queue tee quire mass./ Te quiero más que a mi vida,/ ¿qué más quieres? / ¿Quieres más? (If you love me because I love you/ you want for me to love you more/ I love you more than my life/ what else do you want/ do you want something else?

From the 1520's with La Malinche, let's move on now to the 1530's with Guadalupe.

Guadalupe

As in many cases, there is a seamy side of this Virgin. Spaniard soldiers, missionaries and Cortés had a lot to do with the Guadalupe

⁵¹Florescano, Enrique. *Los orígenes del poder en Mesoamérica*, México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009.

⁵² Barjau, Luis. 79, 230.

event. Nevertheless, Guadalupe has a prophetic angle. Like an underground river, she ignited the souls of liberating movements. Priest Hidalgo, the father of four children with two lovers, sewed her image to his clothes and carried this portrait in his famous banner, while discontinuing taxes, distributing land and abolishing slavery. José María Morelos, the son of a black Mexican woman, carried his banner declaring: "We must consider all the rich, the noble, and the high officials as enemies..." The turbulent attitude against Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles oppressive regime, was inspired in the flight of the Holy Family –Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus- to Egypt. Emiliano Zapata, was a land reform leader of the Mexican Revolution. First thing he did after taking Mexico City was to worship Guadalupe at her Tepeyac shrine. After that his soldiers went immediately to the *Casa de los Azulejos* (the Tile House) today's Sanborns, to have their coffee at that fancy shop, mimeting the style of the cream of the crop. César Chavez, the leader of the longest strike in the USA, held on to the Guadalupe banner in his defense of the agricultural workers.

Prophet Guadalupe is concerned with a holistic spirituality which doesn't reduce families to "the sacred family" model, that is, the bourgeois nuclear heterosexual family which contradicts the Hispanic spirituality of the flesh. Latinos value the extended family, which has been the target through slave auctions, immigration deportations, military recruitment, family disbandment due to hunger, etc.

Guadalupe is a liberating icon in political terms, like the 15th century female sensual warriors from Chalco. They got rid of the iron rule of Axayacatl, by taking advantage of their charms, to attack the soldieres: "Ven a unirte, ven a unirte, es mi alegría, dame ya al pequeñín, déjalo colocarse," ("Come together, come together, it is my joy, give me now the little one; let him make himself at home.")⁵³

In Mexican Isthmus of Tehuantepec, androgen children are called *muxe*, that is "women" in Zapoteco, and they are considered the biggest blessing. This persons of the third sex are great listeners, cooks, simultaneously tender and strong in taking care or the elderly and

⁵³ Miguel León-Portilla, "La voz de León-Portilla hizo resurgir cantos y sueños de palabras de la poesía náhuatl", *La Jornada Virtual*, April 24, 2002.

children. Little wonder Mexico City is the first Latin American city which has approved not only gay civil marriage, but also homosexual couple's adoption of children.

Last, as the cherry on the cake, allow me to introduce the painting of the prophet Selena.

Selena

In order to do justice to Selena's elevation, we need to place her within the borderlands context. As late as 1822 Mexico was the largest country of the American Continent. However, on Candlemass February 2, 1848, with the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the U.S.A. took more than half of Mexico's land. Little wonder the Mexicans who never crossed the border but the border crossed them, are the ones who have articulated the most intrepid Maryology. This is the case of Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa when she states: "Like an ear of corn –a female seed-bearing organ- the mestiza is tenacious, tightly wrapped in the husks of her culture. Like kernels she clings to the cob; with thick stalks and strong brace roots, she holds tight to the earth. –She will survive the crossroads."⁵⁴

The spirituality of the flesh redeems the often dismissed 35 Caribbean and Latin American Southern countries, and the South side of our bodies. This type of spirituality does not promote a normative culture at the expense of the others. In the case of Selena, it was still fresh in the air when, in the USA Southwest, Mexican descendents were considered "beeners," "greasers," "bandits," "wetbacks," "pochos," "cholos," "nacos," "mecos;" when restaurants held signs of "No Mexicans and dogs allowed." Within this background Selena emerges, brown and proud; with a cinnamon skin, full, big and flashy red lips, arched eyebrows, lose long black hair, with her curvy and rhythmic body.

While performing, Selena was sending a message of race, gender and class liberation: Hispanic and undocumented are not synonymous. Womanhood and servanthood are not interchangeable. Dark skin and

⁵⁴ Anzaldúa, 81.

sexual incontinence are not hand and glove. That is why "Selena's death and legacy galvanized the Hispanic community in Texas in a way that no movement, including *La Raza Unida*, nor any person, including César Chávez, had ever accomplished. A sense of pride welled in the barrios of this State that had never been felt before."⁵⁵

Conclusion

Allow me to piggy back to the original judgments: "Protestants do not believe in the Virgin", and "Lutherans are Roman Catholics, but without the Virgin." Should we take these charges with a grain of salt? Is there such thing as a one-size-fits-all virgin? Do we believe in the virgin on the pedestal, or the virgin as an army chaplain, or the marketing virgin who fills our churches and coffers? Where do we stand in relation to the Virgin of the Magnificat? Tell me in which portrait of the virgin you believe and I will tell you where you stand!

Spirituality of the flesh takes into account the whole person and the entire creation, following María de Guadalupe, the mother of the "Word made flesh," Jesus Christ and his Reign of justice. This is a flesh, embodied, historicized and politicized spirituality. Hispanics look forward to the *mañana* when all ethnic groups are recognized in our own personhood and collective *Imago Dei*, and when there are no more colonized bodies.

Let's stick to María de Guadalupe's blue advent color, and her advocacy for the poorest of the poor. With Brazilian Paulo Freire the time has come to distinguish between the different and the antagonist person; between diversity and adversity; between different and deficient.

In our success-driven society, which is hostile to the hillbilly, the ghetto, the domestic and sweatshop "Marías", which, in a pan-sexual climate, magnifies female virginity but dissimulates male chastity; which is built on an economic unjust system that rescues the wealthy and ignores the cry of the poor, to which portraits of Mary of Guadalupe do we pay homage? On this sidewalk sale there are portraits ranging

⁵⁵ Patoski, Joe Nick. *Selena; como la flor*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996, 264.

from Mary the Virgin to Mary the fighter for a just and egalitarian social order. According to Scripture and aided by Christian tradition and the spirituality of the flesh: “Lleve el suyo, mi marchante” (“Take your pick, my dear customer.”)

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Resumen

Este ensayo propone la hermenéutica de "la espiritualidad de la carne", a diferencia de la interpretación desde "los pecados de la carne". Lo que trata es de contrarrestar la herencia cristiana llevada a remolque por el pensamiento griego, cartesiano e idealista que despachan de un plumazo la dimensión corporal. Para ilustrarlo se vale de cuatro mujeres: María, La Malinche, Guadalupe, y Selena. Asimismo echa mano de cinco títulos marianos: La Virgen, la Inmaculada, la Paridora, la Asunta y la Profeta.

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